

City of Morgantown
Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes for September 17, 2015

Present: Kristen Cooper
Jan Derry, Chair
Billie Murray
Marlene Robinson-Savino, Vice Chair
Don Spencer, Secretary

Tim Hairston – Liaison w/ State HRC

Meeting called to order by Jan Derry, Chair, at 6:30 p.m. Commissioner Fran Whiteman and David Bott, Administrative Liaison, reported inability to attend and sent written reports on agenda items for which they were responsible. The agenda was approved as printed.

Public Session: Public session attendee Allyson Hock was present with a special interest in the Commission's work based on her work as a master's student at the WVU School of Social Work.

Communications: A NAACP Banquet will be held on September 18 in honor of Charlene Marshall, former Mayor of Morgantown and Delegate to the WV Legislature. The HRC will have a business advertisement in the banquet program.

Diversity Week at WVU is scheduled to begin on September 28. Billie Murray reported that due to lack of finalization of program details, not publicity has been provided for the community to date. She is working to change the lack of publicity.

ON Sunday, September 27, from 1-3 p.m. at Westover Park, the Community Coalition for Social Justice will hold their annual picnic. They have asked each organization to identify a special concern and to bring along material for distribution. After discussion, the Commission agreed by consensus that the HRC concern would be "accessibility relating to housing and other structures".

The Diversity Leadership Conference is planned for Tuesday, September 29 at Lakeview. Persons interested in attending should contact Don Spencer as soon as possible.

Minutes: On a motion by Marlene Robinson-Savino, seconded by Billie Murray, the minutes of the August 20, 2015 were approved.

Priority Items: Jan Derry introduced the subject of preparing for making awards on International Human Rights Day (December 10) – a project included in the HRC's 2015 work plan. A broad ranging discussion involving each member of the Commission ensued. Of particular note was Robinson-Savino's recommendation that the award process be an open process in which community representatives could participate.

It was decided that on the matter of award criteria, Derry, Whiteman and Murray would make contact with award presenting organizations to learn what criteria is used so that a best practice plan could be developed for the HRC. Kristen Cooper recommended that the award information also be presented on the radio and TV after decision making at the next meeting. Spencer took notes on the discussion and agreed to make a draft plan available with the minutes.

Progress Reports: Jan Derry reported on the presentation of the HRC accessibility and just transition resolutions to the City Council. Both were approved by a 6-1 vote. The only negative votes were from a City Councilor who had unspecified objections to “process” but who had not attended the COW meeting when the resolutions were presented. Derry also reported on funds received through a National Dislocated Worker Grant by Workforce West Virginia. It has been reported that these funds will be used primarily in southern West Virginia.

An email report was read from Fran Whiteman regarding the response received from the HRC/City submission of the Municipal Equality Index information for 2015 to the national Human Rights Campaign organization. The City’s score has dropped from 63 in 2014 to 42 in 2015 in part due to a change in the scoring system but also due to the City’s failure to implement liaison positions with city hall and the police department. The HRC will continue to support the liaisons being appointed before the 2016 submission.

Don Spencer reported on his meeting with Chief Ed Preston of the Morgantown Police Department on the possibility of displaying a banner co-sponsored by the HRC and the Police Department affirming that black lives do matter. Spencer reported that the Department will not co-sponsor the posting of a banner on the Public Safety Building but that the Department has made definite progress in diversifying its work force and in training officers on use of restrained force in making arrests.

Marlene Robinson-Savino reported on the establishment of the 24/7 Human Rights Contact telephone line. The line is in operation but the message will be modified this weekend so that voice mail messages can be received.

Jan Derry reported on progress being made on clarifying the round table information received at the Town Hall Meeting on Human Rights in March. Bob Jones attended the most recent committee meeting and assisted on the mental health table information. The committee, an Inclusive City Plan Committee, continues to meet on alternate Thursday afternoons at the North Central WV Center for Independent Living office.

Marlene Robinson-Savino reported on the progress being made by the Diversity Planning Committee. The Committee is involved with preparing a written plan on standards for operations relating to City employees and volunteers. Kristen Cooper will be joining the Committee at its next meeting on September 28 at the bakery on Burroughs.

David Bott sent an email to provide an update on the preparation of the City’s ADA plan. He also reported that the City may not be required to proceed with the preparation of a formal Affirmative Action Plan.

In regard to the Annual Human Rights Film Festival, Don Spencer reported that progress is moving slowly due to staff overload at the WVU Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. He hopes that he will have more to report at the October HRC meeting.

Spencer reported that the HRC business cards and Annual Report brochures will be ready in time for the upcoming NAACP banquet and CCSJ events.

Regular Meeting Items: Jan Derry reviewed with the Commission the Annual HRC Calendar, the HRC 2015 Work Goals, and Annual Human Rights Observances Calendar entries for September and October.

There were no Commissioner reports. The next meeting of the Commission will be held on October 15, 2015.

The meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Don Spencer, Secretary
September 24, 2015